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Illegal aid to paramilitary group alleged

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U.S. officials may have violated the Neutrality Act and other laws in aiding groups like the Alabama-based Civilian-Military Assistance, two members of which were killed recently during guerrilla activities against Nicaragua, according to a congressional study.

The study report alleges that in the pursuit of its foreign policy in Central America, the U.S. government may have violated 19 U.S. laws and 11 international laws.

The Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus, which released the report yesterday after several months of study, has 135 members in the House and Senate, about 20 of whom are Republicans. The group wrote an addendum about the CMA group and the crash.

Two CMA members were killed in Nicaragua Sept. 1 when a military helicopter crashed during an operation by

CIA-backed rebels, known as "contras," fighting the Marxist-led government of that Central American country.

The State, Justice, Defense and Treasury departments are investigating to determine whether any U.S. laws or regulations were violated, according to the caucus, which was formerly known as Members of Congress for Peace through Law.

The addendum says the CMA may have violated the Arms Export Control Act by failing to obtain export licenses for items such as ammunition clips and camouflage uniforms that are on the munitions list.

It also says the caucus is concerned with "apparent assistance" U.S. officials in El Salvador may have given CMA and the "failure" of officials "to take action to stop what may have been illegal exports of arms."

The report says there appears to have been a "far-reaching and inclusive" pat-

tern in which "numerous individual laws have been violated."

Rep. Jim Leach, R-Iowa, the caucus chairman, said, "The United States has escaped major terrorism because we are a law-abiding nation. If our government fails to abide by the law, it will provide an incentive for others — including terrorists — to follow suit."

Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., a caucus member, said that "to the extent that the law is an obstacle" to the Reagan administration's goals in Central America, it is clear from this review that "it will be violated or ignored."

The caucus said the report, which analyzes legal arguments on both sides of the issue of possible violations, is concerned with the actions of U.S. policy-makers, not private citizens.

Meanwhile, the CIA told the Senate Intelligence Committee that no CIA officers were in contact with any member

of the Alabama-based paramilitary organization before the crash, although they were aware of the group.

The committee was briefed by representatives of the CIA and the Defense Department about the helicopter crash. Afterward, the committee said it was trying to determine whether the U.S. government was officially involved in the incident.

The committee statement said Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., chairman, admonished members at the outset of the closed meeting not to use it as a forum for attacking the two volunteers who died.

"They both were veterans of the Vietnam War," Mr. Goldwater was quoted as saying. "I believe they were men doing what they thought was right. Whether or not they made a good decision here, they have paid for it with their lives, and we should be mindful of that."

— Thomas D. Brandt